IN THE CLAIMS:

1-46. (Canceled)

47 (new). A method of treating hormone dependant cancers and other proliferative disorders, said method comprising the step of administering to a subject in need thereof, a therapeutically effective amount of an estrogen receptor β (ERβ) modulator.

48 (new). The method of claim 47, wherein the ERβ modulator either antagonizes or agonizes ERβ.

49 (new). The method of claim 47, wherein the ERβ modulator is an ERβ agonist.

50 (new). A method of treating hormone dependant cancers and other proliferative disorders, said method comprising the step of administering to a subject in need thereof, a therapeutically effective amount of 7-hydroxylated steroids and/or enzymes capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid.

51 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the 7-hydroxylated steroids are 7α-hydroxylated steroids and/or 7β-hydroxylated steroids.

52 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the 7-hydroxylated steroids are selected from the group consisting of;

i) 7α-hydroxy-DHEA (7DH),

ii) 7α-hydroxy-pregnenolone,

iii) 7α-hydroxy-β-estradiol,

iv) 7α,3β,17β-androstenetriol,

v) 7α,3β,17β-androstanetriol,

vi) 7α-hydroxycholesterol,

vii) 7α-25-hydroxycholesterol,

viii) 7α-24-hydroxycholesterol,

ix) 7α-27-hydroxycholesterol and

x) other 7α-di-hydroxy and 7α-multi-hydroxylated forms of cholesterol.

53 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the 7-hydroxylated steroids and/or enzymes capable of catalysing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid are administered in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.

54 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the 7-hydroxylated steroids and/or enzymes capable of catalysing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid are directly or locally administered to the prostate and/or breast.

55 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the hormone dependant cancer is prostate cancer or breast cancer.

56 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the proliferative disorder is a disorder of the prostate or breast.

57 (new). The method of claim 56, wherein the disorder of the prostate is a disorder of prostate development or prostate ageing.

58 (new). The method of claim 56, wherein the disorder of the prostate is benign prostatic hyperplasia (BHP) and/or prostatitis.

59 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the enzyme that produces 7-hydroxylated steroids is oxysterol 7α-hydroxylase (CYP7B).

60 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is modified.

61 (new). The method of claim 60, wherein the enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is modified to improve substrate affinity.

62 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is recombinantly or synthetically produced.

63 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the 7-hydroxylated steroid is provided by contacting an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of said 7-hydroxylated steroid or a cell comprising an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of said 7-hydroxylated steroid, with a suitable substrate.

64 (new). The method of claim 63, wherein the cell is transformed with a vector containing a gene encoding an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of said 7-hydroxylated steroid.

65 (new). The method of claim 63, wherein the suitable substrate is selected from the group consisting of;

i) dehydroepiandosterone (DHEA),

ii) 3β-androstanediol,

iii) 3β-androstenediol; and

iv) β-estradiol

66 (new). The method of claim 50, wherein the enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is provided by means of a nucleic acid encoding said

enzyme.

67 (new). The method of claim 66, wherein the nucleic acid is contained within a nucleic acid vector.

68 (new). The method of claim 66, wherein the nucleic acid encodes oxysterol 7α-hydroxylase (CYP7B).

69 (new). A method of detecting either a level of a 7-hydroxylated steroid or a level of an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid or detecting a mutation in a sequence encoding an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid, wherein the method comprises the steps of;

a) providing a sample from a patient;

b) detecting a level of 7-hydroxylated steroid or an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid or ascertaining the sequence of the nucleic acid encoding said enzyme; and

c) comparing said detected level or the sequence of said nucleic acid with a normal level or sequence.

70 (new). The method according to claim 69 for use in detecting the efficacy of a drug used to treat hormone dependant cancers and other proliferative disorders.

71 (new). The method of claim 69 for use in ascertaining the stage of a tumor.

72 (new). The method of claim 69, wherein the patient is either a healthy person, a person suspected of having, predisposed to developing, or suffering from a hormone dependant cancers or other proliferative disorder.

73 (new). The method of claim 69, wherein the sample is a biopsy or a body fluid.

74 (new). The method of claim 73, wherein the biopsy is a prostate biopsy or breast tissue biopsy.

75 (new). The method of claim 73, wherein the body fluid is selected from the group consisting of

i) blood;

ii) urine; and/or

iii) semen.

76 (new). The method of claim 69, wherein the normal sequence encodes a functional enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid.

77 (new). The method of claim 69, wherein the normal sequence is a sequence that does not comprise a mutation which effects the expression of said functional enzyme.

78 (new). The method of claim 69, wherein the level of 7-hydroxylated steroid or an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is detected by means of immunological detection techniques.

79 (new). The method of claim 78, wherein the level of 7-hydroxylated steroid or an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is detected by ELISA or Western blot.

80 (new). The method of claim 69, wherein the level of an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is detected by PCR and associated techniques, for example RT-PCR, quantitative PCR and quantitative RT-PCR.

81 (new). The method of claim 69, wherein the level of an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is detected by spectrophotometric and enzymatic reactions

82 (new). A method of detecting a 7-hydroxylated steroid or an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid in a patient, comprising administering to a patient an amount of a molecule capable of interacting with a 7-hydroxylated steroid or an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid and detecting any complex comprising said molecule and said 7-hydroxylated steroid or enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid.

83 (new). The method of claim 82, wherein the molecule capable of interacting with a 7-hydroxylated steroid or an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid is an antibody.

84 (new). The method of claim 82, wherein the molecule or antibody further comprises a radiolabel or a radioactive isotope.

85 (new). A method for identifying agents capable of modulating the activity of an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid, wherein said assay comprises the steps of:

a) contacting an agent with a prostate cell comprising an enzyme capable of catalyzing the production of a 7-hydroxylated steroid, in the presence of a substrate capable of being converted to a 7-hydroxylated steroid by said enzyme; and
b) detecting an amount of substrate converted to a 7-hydroxylated steroid by said enzyme and comparing said level to a normal level.

86. Use of agents identified by the method of claim 85 for the treatment and/or prevention of hormone dependant cancers and other proliferative disorders.